

**AEROSPACE POWER IN URBAN
WARFARE: BEWARE THE
HORNET'S NEST**

Peter C. Hunt

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Comments pertaining to this paper are invited; please forward to:

Director, USAF Institute for National Security Studies

HQ USAFA/DFES

2354 Fairchild Drive, Suite 5L27

USAF Academy, CO 80840

phone: 719-333-2717

fax: 719-333-2716

email: james.smith@usafa.af.mil

Visit the Institute for National Security Studies home page at

<http://www.usafa.af.mil/inss>

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to publish this thirtieth-ninth volume in the *Occasional Paper* series of the US Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). Aerospace power has emerged as a primary military instrument of choice in pursuing national objectives within the complex international security environment entering the 21st century. Changes in the security landscape, the dynamics of sub-theater conflicts, and coalition imperatives combine to place new requirements on aerospace operational planning and the conduct of aerospace operations themselves. Occasional Papers 38 and 39 address, in turn, both political and operational dimensions of aerospace power application today. They are presented both for informational and educational purposes to offer informed perspectives on important aspects of contemporary aerospace operations, to generate informed discussion and to bound productive debate on aerospace power in both supported and supporting roles. In Occasional Paper 38, *Constraints, Restraints, and the Role of Aerospace Power in the 21st Century*, Jeffrey Beene presents a comprehensive examination of the use of aerospace power within tightly restrained conflicts and suggests improvements in doctrine, training, and tools to more effectively employ such power within that environment. Then in Occasional Paper 39, *Aerospace Power in Urban Warfare: Beware the Hornet's Nest*, Peter Hunt examines the employment of aerospace power in the increasingly important urban operational environment. Aerospace technologies and systems offer alternatives and important adjuncts to surface forces in the urban arena, but significant obstacles and critical considerations must be brought into planning for such operations. Each of these aspects of aerospace power demands greater thought and analysis, and these two occasional papers are presented to help focus that attention.

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JAMES M. SMITH
Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interservice debates concerning urban warfare diverge along two paths. One approach emphasizes the role of infantry, whereas the second approach seeks ways to achieve operational and strategic objectives without large numbers of ground forces. This alternative approach relies on aerospace power to provide commanders with better intelligence, which they can use to analyze and target entities valued by the enemy.

Aerospace power should emphasize those tasks that best support the joint force. The urban area provides aerospace power with advantages over surface-based counterparts, yet it introduces variables affecting the offense-defense relationship that should not be overlooked. The compression of time, space and levels of war in an urban environment threatens to reduce aerospace power effectiveness, much as it degrades the fire and maneuver of surface forces.

Little evidence or doctrine exists concerning offensive aerospace power against modern, well-equipped urban defenders. An operational-level strategy that isolates the enemy optimizes aerospace power with minimum risk, but requires accurate intelligence and specialized munitions. The strength of urban aerospace defenses and the time required to achieve objectives should not be underestimated. Enemies defending the terrain on which they live and work tend to devise workarounds to defeat the most militarily capable attackers.

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